LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 28
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Toleration

Voltaire

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TOLERATION

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE DEATH OF JEAN CALAS

The murder of Calas, which was perpetrated with the sword of justice at Toulouse on March 9, 1762, is one of the most singular events that deserve the attention of our own and of later ages. We quickly forget the long list of the dead who have perished in our battles. It is the inevitable fate of war; those who die by the sword might themselves have inflicted death on their enemies, and did not die without the means of defending themselves. When the risk and the advantage are equal astonishment ceases, and even pity is enfeebled. But when an innocent father is given into the hands of error, of passion, or of fanaticism; when the accused has no defense but his virtue; when those who dispose of his life run no risk but that of making a mistake; when they can slay with impunity by a legal decree—then the voice of the general public is heard, and each fears for himself. They see that no man's life is safe before a court that has been set up to guard the welfare of citizens, and every voice is raised in a demand of vengeance.

In this strange incident we have to deal with religion, suicide, and parricide. The question was, Whether a father and mother had

strangled their son to please God, a brother had strangled his brother, and a friend had strangled his friend; or whether the judges had incurred the reproach of breaking on the wheel an innocent father, or of sparing a guilty mother, brother, and friend.

Jean Calas, a man of sixty-eight years, had been engaged in commerce at Toulouse for more than forty years, and was recognized by all who knew him as a good father. He was a Protestant, as were also his wife and family, except one son, who had abjured the heresy, and was in receipt of a small allowance from his father. He seemed to be so far removed from the absurd fanaticism that breaks the bonds of society that he had approved the conversion of his son [Louis Calas], and had had in his service for thirty years a zealous Catholic woman, who had reared all his children.

One of the sons of Jean Calas, named Marc Antoine, was a man of letters. He was regarded as of a restless, somber, and violent character. This young man, failing to enter the commercial world, for which he was unfitted, or the legal world, because he could not obtain the necessary certificate that he was a Catholic, determined to end his life, and informed a friend of his intention. He strengthened his resolution by reading all that has ever been written on suicide.

Having one day lost his money in gambling, he determined to carry out his plan on that very day. A personal friend and friend of the family, named Lavaisse, a young man of nineteen, well known for his candid and kindly

ways, the son of a distinguished lawyer at Toulouse, had come from Bordeaux on the previous day, October 12, 1761. He happened to sup with the Calas family. The father, mother, Marc Antoine, the elder son, and Pierre, the second son, were present. After supper they withdrew to a small room. Marc Antoine disappeared, and when young Lavaisse was ready to go, and he and Pierre Calas had gone downstairs, they found, near the shop below, Marc Antoine in his shirt, hanging from a door, his coat folded under the counter. His shirt was unruffled, his hair was neatly combed, and he had no wound or mark on the body.

We will omit the details which were given in court, and the grief and despair of his parents; their cries were heard by the neighbors. Lavaisse and Pierre, beside themselves, ran for surgeons and police.

While they were doing this, and the father and mother sobbed and wept, the people of Toulouse gathered round the house. They are superstitious and impulsive people; they regard as monsters their brothers who do not share their religion. It was at Toulouse that solemn thanks were offered to God for the death of Henry III, and that an oath was taken to kill any man who should propose to recognize the great and good Henry IV. This city still celebrates every year, by a procession and fireworks, the day on which it massacred four thousand heretical citizens two hundred years ago. Six decrees of the Council have been passed in vain for the suppression of this odi-

ous festival! the people of Toulouse celebrate it still like a floral festival.[1]

Some fanatic in the crowd cried out that Jean Calas had hanged his son Marc Antoine. The cry was soon repeated on all sides; some adding that the deceased was to have abjured Protestantism on the following day, and that the family and young Lavaisse had strangled him out of hatred of the Catholic religion. In a moment all doubt had disappeared. The whole town was persuaded that it is a point of religion with the Protestants for a father and mother to kill their children when they wish to change their faith.

The agitation could not end here. It was imagined that the Protestants of Languedoc had held a meeting the night before; that they had, by a majority of votes, chosen an executioner for the sect; that the choice had fallen on young Lavaisse; and that, in the space of twenty-four hours, the young man had received the news of his appointment, and had come from Bordeaux to help Jean Calas, his wife, and their son Pierre to strangle a friend, son, and brother.

The captain of Toulouse, David, excited by

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[1]The condition of Toulouse will be best understood from a description of those processions which Voltaire gives elsewhere. In front walked the shoemakers, bearing the authentic head of a prince of Peloponnesus, who had been Bishop of Toulouse *during the lifetime* of Christ. After them came the slaters, carrying the bones of the fourteen thousand children slain by Herod; the old-clothes dealers, with a piece of the dress of the Virgin Mary; and the tailors, with the relics of St. Peter and St. Paul.

these rumors and wishing to give effect to them by a prompt execution, took a step which is against the laws and regulations. He put the Calas family, the Catholic servant, and Lavaisse in irons.

A report not less vicious than his procedure was published. He even went further. Marc Antoine Calas had died a Calvinist; and, if he had taken his own life, his body was supposed to be dragged on a hurdle. Instead of this, he was buried with great pomp in the church of St. Stephen, although the priest protested against this profanation.

There are in Languedoc four confraternities of penitents—the white, the blue, the gray, and the black. Their members wear a long hood, with a cloth mask, pierced with two holes for the eyes. They endeavored to induce the Duke of Fitz-James, the governor of the province, to enter their ranks, but he refused. The white penitents held solemn service over Marc Antoine Calas, as over a martyr. No church ever celebrated the feast of a martyr with more pomp; but it was a terrible pomp. They had raised above a magnificent bier a skeleton, which was made to move its bones. It represented Marc Antoine Calas holding a palm in one hand, and in the other the pen with which he was to sign his abjuration of heresy. This pen, in point of fact, signed the death-sentence of his father.

The only thing that remained for the poor devil who had taken his life was canonization. Everybody regarded him as a saint; some invoked him, others went to pray at his tomb,

others sought miracles of him, and others, again, related the miracles he had wrought. A monk extracted some of his teeth, to have permanent relics of him. A pious woman, who was rather deaf, told how she heard the sound of bells. An apoplectic priest was cured, after taking an emetic. Legal declarations of these prodigies were drawn up. The writer of this account has in his possession the attestation that a young man of Toulouse went mad because he had prayed for several nights at the tomb of the new saint, and could not obtain the miracle he sought.

Some of the magistrates belonged to the confraternity of white penitents. From that moment the death of Jean Calas seemed inevitable.

What contributed most to his fate was the approach of that singular festival which the people of Toulouse hold every year in memory of the massacre of four thousand Huguenots. The year 1762 was the bicentenary of the event. The city was decorated with all the trappings of the ceremony, and the heated imagination of the people was still further excited. It was stated publicly that the scaffold on which the Calas were to be executed would be the chief ornament of the festival; it was said that Providence itself provided these victims for sacrifice in honor of our holy religion. A score of people heard these, and even more violent things. And this in our days—in an age when philosophy has made so much progress, and a hundred academies are writing for the improvement of our morals! It would

seem that fanaticism is angry at the success of reason, and combats it more furiously.

Thirteen judges met daily to bring the trial to a close. There was not, and could not be, any evidence against the family; but a deluded religion took the place of proof. Six of the judges long persisted in condemning Jean Calas, his son, and Lavaisse to the wheel, and the wife of Jean Calas to the stake. The other seven, more moderate, wished at least to make an inquiry. The discussions were long and frequent. One of the judges, convinced that the accused were innocent and the crime was impossible, spoke strongly on their behalf. He opposed a zeal for humanity to the zeal for severity, and became the public pleader for the Calas in Toulouse, where the incessant cries of outraged religion demanded the blood of the accused. Another judge, known for his violent temper, spoke against the Calas with the same spirit. At last, amid great excitement, they both threw up the case and retired to the country.

But by a singular misfortune the judge who was favorable to the Calas had the delicacy to persist in his resignation, and the other returned to condemn those whom he could not judge. His voice it was that drew up the condemnation to the wheel. There were now eight votes to five, as one of the six opposing judges had passed to the more severe party after considerable discussion.

It seems that in a case of parricide, when a father is to be condemned to the most frightful death, the verdict ought to be unanimous, as

the evidence for so rare a crime ought to be such as to convince everybody.[2] The slightest doubt in such a case should intimidate a judge who is to sign the death-sentence. The weakness of our reason and its inadequacy are shown daily; and what greater proof of it can we have than when we find a citizen condemned to the wheel by a majority of one vote? In ancient Athens there had to be fifty votes above the half to secure a sentence of death. It shows us, most unprofitably, that the Greeks were wiser and more humane than we.

It seems impossible that Jean Calas, an old man of sixty-eight years, whose limbs had long been swollen and weak, had been able to strangle and hang a young man in his twenty-eighth year, above the average in strength. It seemed certain that he must have been assisted in the murder by his wife, his son Pierre, La-

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[2] I know of only two instances in history of fathers being charged with killing their children on account of religion. The first is the case of the father of St. Barbara, or Ste. Barbe. He had two windows made in his bath-room. Barbara, in his absence, had a third made, to honor the Holy Trinity. She made the sign of the cross on the marble columns *with the tip of her finger*, and it was deeply engraved on the stone. Her son came angrily upon her, sword in hand; but she escaped through a mountain, which opened to receive her. The father went round the mountain and caught her. She was stripped and flogged, but God clothed her in a white cloud. In the end her father cut off her head. So says the *Flower of the Saints.*

The second case is that of Prince Hermenegild. He rebelled against his father, the king, gave him battle (in 584), and was beaten and killed by an officer. As his father was an Arian, he was regarded as a martyr.

vaisse, and the servant. They had not left each other's company for an instant on the evening of the fatal event. But this supposition was just as absurd as the other. How could a zealous Catholic servant allow Huguenots to kill a young man, reared by herself, to punish him for embracing her own religion? How could Lavaisse have come expressly from Bordeaux to strangle his friend, whose conversion was unknown to him? How could a tender mother lay hands on her son? How could the whole of them together strangle a young man who was stronger than all of them without a long and violent struggle, without cries that would have aroused the neighbors, without repeated blows and torn garments?

It was evident that, if there had been any crime, all the accused were equally guilty, as they had never left each other for a moment; it was evident that they were not all guilty; and it was evident that the father alone could not have done it. Nevertheless, the father alone was condemned to the wheel.

The reason of the sentence was as inconceivable as all the rest. The judges, who were bent on executing Jean Calas, persuaded the others that the weak old man could not endure the torture, and would on the scaffold confess his crime and accuse his accomplices. They were confounded when the old man, expiring on the wheel, prayed God to witness his innocence, and begged him to pardon his judges.

They were compelled to pass a second sentence in contradiction of the first, and to set free the mother, the son Pierre, the young

Lavaisse, and the servant; but one of the councillors pointing out that this verdict gave the lie to the other, that they were condemning themselves, and that, as the accused were all together at the supposed hour of the crime, the acquittal of the survivors necessarily proved the innocence of the dead father, they decided to banish Pierre Calas. This banishment seemed as illogical and absurd as all the rest. Pierre Calas was either guilty or innocent. If he was guilty, he should be broken on the wheel like his father; if he was innocent, they had no right to banish him. However, the judges, terrified by the execution of the father and the touching piety of his end, thought they were saving their honor by affecting to pardon the son, as if it were not a fresh prevarication to pardon him; and they thought that the banishment of this poor and helpless young man was not a great injustice after that they had already committed.

They began with threatening Pierre Calas, in his dungeon, that he would suffer like his father if he did not renounce his religion. The young man attests this on oath: "A Dominican monk came to my cell and threatened me with the same kind of death if I did not give up my religion."

Pierre Calas, on leaving the city, met a priest, who compelled him to return to Toulouse. They confined him in a Dominican convent, and forced him to perform Catholic functions. It was part of what they wanted. It was the price of his father's blood, and religion seemed to be avenged.

The daughters were taken from the mother and put in a convent. The mother, almost sprinkled with the blood of her husband, her eldest son dead, the younger banished, deprived of her daughters and all her property, was alone in the world, without bread, without hope, dying of the intolerable misery. Certain persons, having carefully examined the circumstances of this horrible adventure, were so impressed that they urged the widow, who had retired into solitude, to go and demand justice at the feet of the throne.[3] At the same time she shrank from publicity; moreover, being English by birth, and having been transplanted into a French province in early youth, the name of Paris terrified her. She imagined that the capital of the kingdom would be still more barbaric than the capital of Languedoc. At length the duty of clearing the memory of her husband prevailed over her weakness. She reached Paris almost at the point of death. She was astonished at her reception, at the help and the tears that were given her.[4]

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[3]Voltaire nobly conceals his work. It was he who, from his exile near Geneva, sent for young Calas, made searching inquiries in Toulouse, and instructed the Parisian lawyers to appeal. He enlisted the interest of English and French visitors at Geneva, and there was "a rivalry in generosity between the two nations." After a long struggle with Toulouse authorities the sentence was reversed at Paris amid general enthusiasm. The King very generously pensioned the widow and other victims.

[4]Thanks to Voltaire and to the progress of Rationalism at Paris, she was received with the greatest enthusiasm and generosity.

At Paris reason dominates fanaticism, however powerful it be; in the provinces fanaticism almost always overcomes reason.

M. de Beaumont, the famous advocate of the *Parlement de Paris*, undertook to defend her, and drew up a memorial signed by fifteen advocates. M. Loiseau, not less eloquent, drew up a memoir on behalf of the family. M. Mariette, an advocate of the Council, drew up a judicial inquiry which brought conviction to every mind. These three generous defenders of the laws of innocence gave to the widow the profit on the sale of their memoirs. Paris and the whole of Europe were moved with pity, and demanded justice for the unfortunate woman. The verdict was given by the public long before it was signed by the Council.

The spirit of pity penetrated the ministry, in spite of the torrent of business that so often shuts out pity, and in spite of that daily sight of misery that does even more to harden the heart. The daughters were restored to their mother. As they sat, clothed in crepe and bathed in tears, their judges were seen to weep.

They still had enemies, however, for it was a question of religion. Many of those people who are known in France as "devout"[5] said openly that it was much better to let an innocent old Calvinist be slain than to compel eight Councillors of Languedoc to admit that they were wrong. One even heard such phrases as "There are more magistrates than Calas"; and

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5In ancient Rome the *devoti* were those who devoted themselves to the good of the Republic.

it was inferred that the Calas family ought to be sacrificed to the honor of the magistrates. They did not reflect that the honor of judges, like that of other men, consists in repairing their blunders. It is not believed in France that the Pope is infallible, even with the assistance of his cardinals;[6] we might just as well admit that eight judges of Toulouse are not. All other people, more reasonable and disinterested. said that the Toulouse verdict would be reversed all over Europe, even if special considerations prevented it from being reversed by the Council.

Such was the position of this astonishing adventure when it moved certain impartial and reasonable persons to submit to the public a few reflections on the subject of toleration, indulgence, and pity, which the Abbé Houteville calls "a monstrous dogma," in his garbled version of the facts, and which reason calls an "appanage of nature."

Either of the judges of Toulouse, swept away by the fanaticism of the people, have broken on the wheel an innocent man, which is unprecedented; or the father and his wife strangled their elder son, with the assistance of another son and a friend, which is unnatural. In either case the abuse of religion has led to a great crime. It is, therefore, of interest to the race to inquire whether religion ought to be charitable or barbaric.

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[6]The Catholic Church did not discover the infallibility of the Pope until 1870, since which date his lips have remained, officially, closed.

HOW TOLERATION MAY BE ADMITTED

I venture to think that some enlightened and magnanimous minister, some humane and wise prelate, some prince who puts his interest in the number of his subjects and his glory in their welfare, may deign to glance at this inartistic and defective paper. He will supply its defects and say to himself: What do I risk in seeing my land cultivated and enriched by a larger number of industrious workers, the revenue increased, the State more flourishing?

Germany would be a desert strewn with the bones of Catholics, Protestants and Anabaptists, slain by each other, if the peace of Westphalia had not at length brought freedom of conscience.

We have Jews at Bordeaux and Metz and in Alsace; we have Lutherans, Molinists, and Jansenists; can we not suffer and control Calvinists on much the same terms as those on which Catholics are tolerated at London? The more sects there are, the less danger in each. Multiplicity enfeebles them. They are all restrained by just laws which forbid disorderly meetings, insults and sedition and are ever enforced by the community.

We know that many fathers of families, who have made large fortunes in foreign lands, are ready to return to their country. They ask only the protection of natural law, the validity of their marriages, security as to the condition of their children, the right to inherit from their fathers, and the enfranchisement of their persons. They ask not for public chapels,

or the right to municipal offices and dignities. Catholics have not these things in England and other countries. It is not a question of giving immense privileges and secure positions to a faction, but of allowing a peaceful people to live, and of moderating the laws once, but no longer, necessary. It is not our place to tell the ministry what is to be done; we do but ask consideration for the unfortunate.

How many ways there are of making them useful, and preventing them from ever being dangerous! The prudence of the ministry and the Council, supported as it is by force, will easily discover these means, which are already happily employed by other nations.

There are still fanatics among the Calvinistic populace; but it is certain that there are far more among the convulsionary (bigoted Catholic) populace. The dregs of the fanatical worshipers of St. Medard count as nothing in the nation; the dregs of the Calvinistic prophets are annihilated. The great means to reduce the number of fanatics, if any remain, is to submit that disease of the mind to the treatment of reason, which slowly, but infallibly, enlightens men. Reason is gentle and humane. It inspires liberality, suppresses discord, and strengthens virtue; it has more power to make obedience to the laws attractive than force has to compel it. And shall we take no account of the ridicule that attaches today to the enthusiasm of these good people? Ridicule is a strong barrier to the extravagance of all sectarians. The past is as if it had never been.

We must always start from the present—from the point which nations have already reached.

There was a time when it was thought necessary to issue decrees against those who taught a doctrine at variance with the categories of Aristotle, the abhorrence of a vacuum, the quiddities, the universal apart from the object. We have in Europe more than a hundred volumes of jurisprudence on sorcery and the way to distinguish between false and real sorcerers. The excommunication of grasshoppers and harmful insects has been much practiced, and still survives in certain rituals. But the practice is over; Aristotle and the sorcerers and grasshoppers are left in peace. There are countless instances of this folly, once thought so important. Other follies arise from time to time; but they have their day and are abandoned. What would happen today if a man were minded to call himself a Carpocratian, a Eutychian, a Monothelite, a Monophysist, a Nestorian, or a Manichaean? We should laugh at him, as at a man dressed in the garb of former days.

The nation was beginning to open its eyes when the Jesuits Le Tellier and Doucin fabricated the bull *Unigenitus* and sent it to Rome. They thought that they still lived in those ignorant times when the most absurd statements were accepted without inquiry. They ventured even to condemn the proposition, a truth of all times and all places: "The fear of unjust excommunication should not prevent one from doing one's duty." It was a proscription of reason, of the liberties of the Gallican Church,

and of the fundamental principle of morals. It was to say to men: God command you never to do your duty if you fear injustice. Never was common sense more outrageously challenged. The counsellors of Rome were not on their guard. The papal court was persuaded that the bull was necessary, and that the nation desired it; it was signed, sealed, and dispatched. You know the results; assuredly, if they had been foreseen, the bull would have been modified. There were angry quarrels, which the prudence and goodness of the king have settled.

So it is in regard to a number of the points which divide the Protestants and ourselves. Some are of no consequence, some are more serious; but on these points the fury of the controversy has so far abated that the Protestants themselves no longer enter into disputes in their churches.

It is a time of disgust, of satiety, or, rather, of reason, that may be used as an epoch and guarantee of public tranquillity. Controversy is an epidemic disease that nears its end, and what is now needed is gentle treatment. It is to the interest of the State that its expatriated children should return modestly to the homes of their fathers. Humanity demands it, reason counsels it, and politics need not fear it.

WHETHER INTOLERANCE IS OF NATURAL AND HUMAN LAW

Natural law is that indicated to men by nature. You have reared a child; he owes you respect as a father, gratitude as a benefactor.

You have a right to the products of the soil that you have cultivated with your own hands. You have given or received a promise; it must be kept.

Human law must in every case be based on natural law. All over the earth the greatest principle of both is: Do not unto others what you would that they do not unto you. Now, in virtue of this principle, one man cannot say to another: "Believe what I believe and what thou canst not believe or thou shalt perish." Thus do men speak in Portugal, Spain, and Goa. In some other countries they are now content to say: "Believe, or I detest thee; believe, or I will do all harm I can. Monster, thou sharest not thy religion, and therefore hast no religion; thou shalt be a thing of horror to thy neighbors, thy city, and thy province."

If it were a point of human law to behave thus, the Japanese should detest Chinese, who should abhor the Siamese; the Siamese, in turn should persecute the Thibetans, who should fall upon the Hindus. A Mogul should tear out the heart of the first Malabarian he met; the Malabarian should slay the Persian, who might massacre the Turk; and all of them should fling themselves against the Christians, who have so long devoured each other.

The supposed right of intolerance is absurd and barbaric. It is the right of the tiger; nay, it is far worse, for tigers do but tear in order to have food, while we rend each other for paragraphs.

WHETHER INTOLERANCE WAS KNOWN TO THE GREEKS

The people of whom history has given us some slight knowledge regarded their different religions as links that bound them together; it was an association of the human race. There was a kind of right to hospitality among the gods, just as there was among men. When a stranger reached a town, his first act was to worship the gods of the country; even the gods of enemies were strictly venerated. The Trojans offered prayers to the gods who fought for the Greeks.

Alexander, in the deserts of Libya, went to consult the god Ammón, whom the Greeks called Zeus and the Latins Jupiter, though they both had their own Zeus or Jupiter at home. When a town was besieged, sacrifices and prayers were offered to the gods of the town to secure their favor. Thus in the very midst of war religion united men and moderated their fury, though at times it enjoined on them inhuman and horrible deeds.

I may be wrong, but it seems to me that not one of the ancient civilized nations restricted the freedom of thought.[7] Each of them had a religion, but it seems to me that they used it in regard to men as they did in regard to their gods. All of them recognized a supreme God, but they associated with him a prodigious number of lesser divinities. They

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[7]This position could be held in a modified form in regard to ancient Greece. See E. S. P. Hayne's work *Religious Persecution.*

had only one cult, but they permitted numbers of special systems.

The Greeks, for instance, however religious they were, allowed the Epicureans to deny providence and the existence of the soul. I need not speak of the other sects which all offended against the sound idea of the creative being, yet were all tolerated.

Socrates, who approached nearest to a knowledge of the Creator, is said to have paid for it, and died a martyr to the Deity; he is the only man whom the Greeks put to death for his opinions. If that was really the cause of his condemnation, however, it is not to the credit of intolerance, since they punished only the man who alone gave glory to God, and honored those who held unworthy views of the Deity. The enemies of toleration would, I think, be ill advised to quote the odious example of the judges of Socrates.

It is evident, moreover, that he was the victim of a furious party, angered against him. He had made irreconcilable enemies of the sophists, orators, and poets who taught in the schools, and of all the teachers in charge of the children of distinguished men. He himself admits, in his discourse given to us by Plato, that he went from house to house proving to the teachers that they were ignorant. Such conduct was hardly worthy of one whom an oracle had declared to be the wisest of men. A priest and a councillor of the Five Hundred were put forward to accuse him. I must confess that I do not know what the precise ac-

cusation was; I find only vagueness in his apology. He is made to say, in general, that he was accused of instilling into young men sentiments in opposition to the religion and government. It is the usual method of calumniators, but a court would demand accredited facts and precise charges. Of these there is no trace in the trial of Socrates.[8] We know only that at first there were two hundred and twenty votes in his favor. From this we may infer that the court of Five Hundred included two hundred and twenty philosophers; I doubt if so many could be found elsewhere. The majority at length condemned him to drink the hemlock; but let us remember that, when the Athenians returned to their senses, they regarded both the accusers and the judges with horror; that Melitus, the chief author of the sentence, was condemned to death for his injustice; and that the others were banished, and a temple was erected to Socrates. Never was philosophy so much avenged and honored. The case of Socrates is really the most terrible argument that can be used against intolerance. The Athenians had an altar dedicated to foreign gods—the gods they knew not. Could there be a stronger proof, not merely of their indulgence to all nations, but even of respect for their cults?

A French writer, in attempting to justify the massacre of St. Bartholomew, quotes the war of the Phoceans, known as "the sacred

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[8]See *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (Little Blue Book No. 94).

war," as if this war had been inspired by cult, or dogma, or theological argument. Nay, it was a question only of determining to whom a certain field belonged; it is the subject of all wars. Beards of corn are not a symbol of faith; no Greek town ever went to war for opinions. What, indeed, would this gentleman have? Would he have us enter upon a "sacred war"?

WHETHER THE ROMANS WERE TOLERANT

Among the ancient Romans you will not find, from Romulus until the days when the Christians disputed with the priests of the empire, a single man persecuted on account of his opinions. Cicero doubted everything; Lucretius denied everything; yet they incurred not the least reproach. Indeed, license went so far that Pliny, the naturalist, began his book by saying that there is no god, or that, if there is, it is the sun. Cicero, speaking of the lower regions, says: "There is no old woman so stupid as to believe in them." Juvenal says: "Even the children do not believe." They sang in the theater at Rome: "There is nothing after death, and death is nothing." We may abhor these maxims, or at the most forgive a people whom the light of the gospel had not reached; but we must conclude that the Romans were very tolerant, since they did not excite a single murmur.

The great principle of the Senate and people of Rome was, "Offenses against the gods are the business of the gods." They dreamed only

of conquering, governing, and civilizing the world. They were our legislators and our conquerors; and Caesar, who gave us roads, laws, and games, never attempted to compel us to abandon our druids for him, great pontiff as he was of our sovereign nation.

The Romans did not profess all cults, or assign public functions to all, but they permitted all. They had no material object of worship under Numa, no pictures or statues; though they presently erected statues to "the gods of the great nations," whom they copied from the Greeks. The law of the Twelve Tables, "Foreign gods shall not be worshipped," means only that public cult shall be given only to the superior divinities approved by the Senate. Isis had a temple at Rome until Tiberius destroyed it. The Jews were engaged in commerce there since the time of the Punic war, and had synagogues there in the days of Augustus. They kept them almost always as in modern Rome. Can there be a clearer proof that toleration was regarded by the Romans as the most sacred line of the law of nations?

We are told that, as soon as the Christians appeared, they were persecuted by the Romans, who persecuted nobody. It seems to me that the statement is entirely false, and I need only quote St. Paul himself in disproof of it. In the *Acts of the Apostles* (xxv 16) we read that, when Paul was dragged before the Roman Governor by the Jews in some religious quarrel, Festus said: "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die before that

he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself." These words are the more remarkable for a Roman magistrate, because he seems to have had nothing but contempt for Paul. Deceived by the false light of his reason, he took Paul for a fool, and said: "Much learning doth make thee mad." He was, therefore, having regard only to the equity of Roman law in giving his protection to a stranger for whom he had no esteem.

Thus the Bible testifies that the Romans were just, and did not persecute. It was not the Romans who fell upon Paul, but the Jews. St. James, the brother of Jesus, was stoned by the order of a Jewish Sadducee, not of a Roman. The Jews alone stoned St. Stephen; and St. Paul, in holding the cloaks of the executioners, certainly did not act as a Roman citizen.[9]

The first Christians had, no doubt, no cause of quarrel with the Romans! their only enemies were the Jews, from whom they were beginning to separate; we know the fierce hatred that sectarians always have for those who leave the sect. There were probably disturbances in the synagogues at Rome. Suetonius says, in his life of Claudius: "Judæos impulsore Christo assidue tumultunates Roma ex-

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[9]The Jews had no right to inflict death after Judea had become a Roman province, but the authorities at times overlooked these punishments of blasphemy.

pulit."[10] He was wrong in saying that they were instigated by Christ, and was not likely to be well informed in detail about a people so much despised at Rome as the Jews were; but he was not mistaken as to the subject of the quarrels. Suetonius wrote under Hadrian, in the second century, when the Christians were not distinct from the Jews in Roman eyes. His words show that the Romans, instead of oppressing the first Christians, rather coerced the Jews who persecuted them. They wished the Roman synagogue to deal as indulgently with their separated brethren as the Senate did. The banished Jews returned soon afterward, and even attained high positions in spite of the laws which excluded them, as Dio Cassius and Ulpian tell us. Is it possible that, after the ruin of Jerusalem, the emperors should lavish honors on the Jews, and persecute, and hand over to the executioner or the beasts, Christians, who were regarded as a Jewish sect?

It is said that Nero persecuted them. Tacitus tells us that they were accused of setting fire to Rome, and were abandoned to the fury of the people. Was that on account of their religious belief? Certainly not. Shall we say that the Chinese who were slain by the Dutch a

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[10] Ch. 25. Voltaire has in this followed ecclesiastical custom. The word in Suetonius is not "Christo," but "Chresto," and therefore the passage reads, in English: "Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome for their constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus." As Chrestus was not an uncommon name at Rome, there is no need to apply the passage to Christ in any way.

few years ago in the suburbs of Batavia were sacrificed on account of religion? However much a man may wish to deceive himself, it is impossible to ascribe to intolerance the disaster that befell a few half-Jewish, half-Christion men and women at Rome under Nero.

ABUSES OF INTOLERANCE

Do I propose, then, that every citizen shall be free to follow his own reason, and believe whatever this enlightened or deluded reason shall dictate to him? Certainly, provided he does not disturb the public order. It does not depend on man to believe or not to believe; but it depends on him to respect the usages of his country. If you insist that it is a crime to disbelieve in the dominant religion, you condemn the first Christians, your fathers, and you justify those whom you reproach with persecuting them.

You say that there is a great difference; that all other religions are the work of man, and the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church alone is the work of God. But surely, the fact that our religion is divine does not imply that it should rule by hatred, fury, exile, the confiscation of goods, imprisonment, torture. murder, and thanksgiving to God for murder? The more divine the Christian religion is, the less it is the place of man to command it; if God is its author, he will maintain it without your aid. You know well that intolerance begets only hypocrites or rebels. Fearful alternative! Would you, indeed, sustain by executioners the religion of a God who fell into the hands of

executioners, and who preached only gentleness and patience?

Reflect on the frightful consequences of the right of intolerance. If it were allowed to despoil, cast in prison, and put to death a citizen who, at a certain degree of latitude, would not profess the religion generally admitted at that degree, how could we except the leaders of the State from those penalties? Religion equally binds the monarch and the beggar; hence more than fifty doctors or monks have made the monstrous assertion that it was lawful to depose or slay any sovereign who dissented from the dominant religion, and the Parliaments of our kingdom have repeatedly condemned these abominable theologians.[11]

The blood of Henry the Great [IV] was still warm when the *Parlement de Paris* issued a decree making the independence of the Crown a fundamental law. Cardinal Duperron, who owed his position to Henry the Great, arose in the States of 1614 against the decree of the Parliament, and had it suppressed. All the

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[11]The Jesuit Busenbaum, edited by the Jesuit La Croix, says that "it is lawful to kill a prince excommunicated by the Pope, in whatever country he may be found, because the universe belongs to the Pope, and he who accepts this commission does a charitable deed." This proposition, drawn up in the ante-chambers of hell, has done more than anything to raise France against the Jesuits. [They were expelled from France in 1767.] They endeavored to justify themselves, by pointing out that the same conclusions are found in St. Thomas and other Dominicans. As a matter of fact, St. Thomas of Aquin, the "angelic doctor" and "interpreter of the divine will"—such are his titles,—says that an

journals of the time record the terms which Duperron used in his discourse: "If a prince became an Arian," he said, "we should be obliged to depose him."

Let us be allowed to say that every citizen is entitled to inherit his father's property, and that we do not see why he should be deprived of it, and dragged to the gibbet, because he takes sides with one theologian against another.

We know that our dogmas were not always clearly explained and universally received in the Church. Christ not having said in what manner the Holy Ghost proceeded, the Latin Church long believed with the Greek that he proceeded from the Father only; after a time it added, in the Creed, that he also proceeded from the Son. I ask whether, the day after this decision, any citizen who preferred to keep to the old formula deserved to be put to death? But is it less unjust and cruel to punish today the man who thinks as people thought in former times? Were men guilty in the days of Honorius I because they did not believe that Jesus had two wills?

It is not long since the Immaculate Conception began to be generally accepted; the Domi-

apostate prince loses his right to the crown, and should no longer be obeyed (Bk. II, Part II, quest. xii); that the Church may punish him with death; that the Emperor Julian was tolerated only because the Christians were weak (same passage); that it is right to kill any heretic (same place, questions xi and xii); that those are laudable who free a people from a tyrannical prince, etc. We must admit that Gerson, Chancellor of the University, went farther than St. Thomas, and the Franciscan Jean Petit much farther than Gerson.

nicans still refuse to believe it.[12] At what particular date will these Dominicans incur the penalties of heresy in this world and the next?

If we need a lesson how to behave in these interminable disputes, we should look to the apostles and evangelists. There was ground for a violent schism between Peter and Paul, and Paul withstood Peter to the face, but the controversy was peacefully settled. The evangelists in turn had a great field of combat. if they had resembled modern writers. They contradict each other frequently; yet we find no dissension among their followers over these contradictions, and they are neatly reconciled by the fathers of the Church. St. Paul, in his epistle to a few Jews at Rome who had been converted to Christianity, says at the end of the third chapter that faith alone glorifies, and works justify no one. St. James, on the contrary, in his epistle (ch. ii) says constantly that one cannot be saved without works. Here is a point that has separated two great sects among us, yet made no division among the apostles.

If the persecution of those with whom we dispute were a holy action, the man who had killed the most heretics would be the greatest saint in Paradise. What a poor figure the man who has been content to despoil and imprison his brothers would cut by the side of the zealot who had slain hundreds of them on St. Bartholomew's days! Here is a proof of it. The successor of St. Peter and his consistory cannot

[12]It was not defined by the Church until 1854.

err. They approved, acclaimed, and consecrated the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Therefore this deed was holy; and therefore of two assassins who were equal in piety one who had killed twenty-four Huguenot women would have double the glory of the man who had killed only a dozen. By the same reasoning the fanatics of Cévènnes would have ground to believe that they would be elevated in glory in proportion to the number of priests, monks, and Catholic women they had slain. It is a strange title to glory in heaven.

WHETHER INTOLERANCE WAS OF DIVINE RIGHT IN JUDAISM, AND WHETHER IT WAS ALWAYS PRACTICED

"Divine right" means, I believe, the precepts which God himself has given. He ordered that the Jews should eat a lamb cooked with lettuces, and that the eaters should stand, with a stick in their hands, in commemoration of the Passover; he commanded that in the consecration of the high-priest blood should be applied to his right ear, right hand, and right foot. They seem curious customs to us, but were not to antiquity. He ordered them to put the iniquities of the people on the goat *hazazel*, and forbade them to eat scaleless fishes, hares, hedgehogs, owls, griffins, etc. He instituted feasts and ceremonies.

All these things, which seem arbitrary to other nations, and a matter of positive law and usage, being ordered by God himself, became a divine law to the Jews, just as whatever Christ ordered is a divine law for us.

Let us not inquire why God substituted a new law for that which he gave to Moses, and why he laid more commandments on Moses than on Abraham, and more on Abraham than on Noah. It seems that he deigns to accommodate himself to the times and the state of the human race. It is a kind of paternal gradation. But these abysses are too deep for our feeble sight. Let us keep to our subject, and see first what intolerance was among the Jews.

It is true that in *Exodus*, *Numbers*, *Leviticus*, and *Deuteronomy* there are very severe laws, and even more severe punishments, in connection with religion. Many commentators find a difficulty in reconciling the words of Moses with the words of Jeremiah and Amos, and those of the celebrated speech of St. Stephen in *Acts*. Amos says that in the deserts the Jews worshiped Moloch, Rempham, and Kimu. Jeremiah says explicitly (vii 12) that God asked no sacrifice of their fathers when they came out of Egypt. St. Stephen says in his speech to the Jews (*Acts* vii 42): "Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices for the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Rempham."

Other critics infer that these gods were tolerated by Moses, and they quote these words of *Deuteronomy* (xii 8): "When ye are in the land of Canaan, ye shall not do all the things that we do here this day, where every man

does what he pleases." They find encouragement in the fact that nothing is said of any religious act of the people in the desert, and there is no mention of Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles, or public prayer in any shape. Circumcision, moreover, the seal of the covenant, was not practiced.

It is enough, it seems to me, that it is proved by Holy Scripture that, in spite of the extraordinary punishment inflicted on the Jews on account of the cult of Apis, they had complete liberty for a long time. Possibly the massacre of twenty-three thousand men by Moses for worshiping the golden calf set up by his brother led him to appreciate that nothing was gained by severity, and induced him to close his eyes to the people's passion for strange gods.

Sometimes he seems to transgress his own law. He forbade the making of images, yet set up a brazen serpent. We find another deviation from the law in the temple of Solomon. He had twelve oxen carved to sustain the great basin of the temple, and in the ark were placed cherubim with the heads of eagles and calves. It seems to have been this calf-head, badly made, and found in the temple by Roman soldiers, which led to the belief that the Jews worshiped an ass.

The worship of foreign gods was vainly prohibited. Solomon was quite at his ease in idolatry. Jeroboam, to whom God had given ten parts of the kingdom, set up two golden calves, and ruled for twenty-two years, uniting in his person the dignities of monarch and pontiff. The little kingdom of Judah under

Rehoboam raised altars and statues to foreign gods. The holy king Asa did not destroy the high places. The high-priest Urijah erects in the temple, in the place of the altar of holocausts, an altar to the king of Syria (2 *Kings* xvi). In a word, there seems to be no real restraint in matters of religion. I know that the majority of the Jewish kings murdered each other, but that was always to further a material interest, not on account of belief.[13]

It is true that some of the prophets secured the interest of heaven in their vengeance. Elias brought down fire from heaven to consume the priests of Baal. Elisha caused two she bears to devour the children who commented on his baldness. But these are rare miracles, and miracles that it would be rather hard to wish to imitate!

It is also objected that the Jewish people were very ignorant and barbaric. In the war with the Midianites Moses ordered that all the male children and their mothers should be slain and the booty divided. Some commentators even argue that thirty-two girls were sacrificed to the Lord: "The Lord's tribute was thirty and two persons [virgins]" (*Numbers* xxxii 40). That the Jews did offer human sacrifices is seen in the story of Jephthah [*Judges* xi 39], and the cutting-up of King Agag by the priest

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[13]Voltaire's earnestness to show the tolerance of the Jews is purely paradoxical and ironical. His sole object in this section is to expose the crudities of the Old Testament, under the cloak of orthodox theological reasoning. Hence he omits the savage laws of *Deuteronomy* against foreign cults.

Samuel. Ezekiel even promises that they will eat human flesh: "Ye shall eat the horse and the rider; ye shall drink the blood of princes." Some commentators apply two verses of this prophecy to the Jews themselves, and the others to the carnivorous beasts. We do not find in the whole history of this people any mark of generosity, magnanimity, or beneficence; yet some ray of toleration escapes always from the cloud of their long and frightful barbarism.

The story of Micah and the Levite, told in chapters xvii and xviii of *Judges*, is another incontestable proof of the great liberty and toleration that prevailed among the Jews. Micah's wife, a rich Ephraimite woman, had lost eleven hundred pieces of silver. Her son restored them to her, and she devoted them to the Lord, making images of him, and built a small chapel. A Levite served the chapel, receiving ten pieces of silver, a tunic, and a cloak every year, besides his food; and Micah said: "Now know I the Lord will do me good seeing I have a Levite to my priest" (xvii 13).

However, six hundred men of the tribe of Dan, who wanted to seize some village of the district to settle in, and had no priest-Levite to secure the favor of God for their enterprise, went to Micah's house, and took the ephod, idols, and Levite, in spite of the remonstrances of the priest and the cries of Micah and his mother. They then proceeded with confidence to attack the village of Lais, and put everything in it to fire and sword, as was their custom. They gave the name of Dan to Lais in honor of their victory, and set Micah's idol

on an altar; and, what is still more remarkable, Jonathan, grandson of Moses, was the high priest of this temple, in which the God of Israel and Micah's idol were worshiped.

After the death of Gideon the Hebrews worshiped Baal-berith for nearly twenty years, and gave up the cult of Adonai; and no leader or judge or priest cried for vengeance. Their crime was great, I admit; but if such idolatry was tolerated, how much the more easily should we tolerate the differences within the proper cult.

Some allege as a proof of intolerance that, when the Lord himself had allowed his ark to be taken by the Philistines in a battle, the only punishment he inflicted on the Philistines was a secret disease, resembling hemorrhoids, the overthrowing of the statue of Dagon, and the sending of a number of rats into their country. And when the Philistines, to appease his anger, had sent back the ark, drawn by two cows, which had calves, and offered to God five golden rats and five golden asses, the Lord slew seventy elders of Israel and fifty thousand of the people for looking at the ark. The answer is plain, therefore: the Lord's chastisement is not connected with belief, or difference of cult, or idolatry.

Had the Lord wished to punish idolatry, he would have slain all the Philistines who dared to take his ark, and who worshiped Dagon; but he slew instead fifty thousand and seventy men of his own people merely because they looked at an ark at which they ought not to have looked. So different are the laws, the

morals, and the economy of the Jews from anything that we know today; so far are the inscrutable ways of God above our own! However, God is not punishing a foreign cult, but a profanation of his own, an indiscreet curiosity, an act of disobedience, possibly a spirit of revolt. We realize that such chastisements belong to God only in the Jewish theocracy. We cannot repeat too often that these times and ways have no relation to our own.

Again, when in later years the idolatrous Naaman asked Elisha if he were allowed to accompany his king to the temple of Simmon, and worship with him, Elisha—the man who caused children to be devoured by bears—merely said, "Go in peace." More remarkable still is the fact that the Lord orders Jeremiah to put cords and yokes round his neck, and send them to the kings of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Tyre, and Sidon, saying, on the part of the Lord: "I have given all your lands to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant." Here we have an idolatrous king declared to be the servant and favorite of God.

The same Jeremiah, whom the petty king of the Jews, Zedekiah, had put in prison and then pardoned, advises the king, on the part of God, to surrender to the king of Babylon. Thus God takes the part of an idolatrous king. He gives him possession of the ark, the mere sight of which had cost fifty thousand and seventy Jews their lives, the holy of holies, and the rest of the temple, the building of which had cost a hundred and eight thousand gold talents, a million and seventeen thousand silver talents, and ten thousand gold drachmas, left by David

and his officers for the construction of the house of the Lord; which, without counting the funds used by Solomon, amounts to nineteen thousand and sixty-two million francs, or thereabouts, of our money [more than $3,750,000,000]. Never was idolatry so signally rewarded! I am aware that the figure is exaggerated, and may be due to a copyist; but if you reduce the sum by half, or to a fourth or an eighth, it is still astonishing. One is hardly surprised at the wealth which Herodotus says he saw in the temple of Ephesus. But treasures are nothing in the eyes of God; the title of his "servant," which is given to Nebuchadnezzar, is the only real treasure.

God is equally favorable to Kir, or Koresh, or Kosroes, whom we call Cyrus. He calls him "his Christ," "his Anointed," although he was not anointed in the ordinary meaning of the word, and he followed the religion of Zoroaster; he calls him his "shepherd," though he was a usurper in the eyes of men. There is no greater mark of predilection in the whole of Scripture.

You read in *Malachi* that "from the east to the west the name of God is great among the nations, and pure oblations are everywhere offered to him." God takes as much care of the idolatrous Ninevites as of the Jews; he threatens and pardons them. Melchizedech, who was not a Jew, sacrified to God. The idolatrous Balaam was a prophet. Scripture shows, therefore, that God not only tolerated other peoples, but took a paternal care of them. And we dare to be intolerant!

EXTREME INTOLERANCE OF THE JEWS

Hence both under Moses, the judges, and the kings you find constant instances of toleration. Moses says several times (*Exodus* xx) that "God punishes the fathers in the children, down to the fourth generation"; and it was necessary thus to threaten a people to whom God had not revealed the immortality of the soul, or the punishments and rewards of another life. The truths were not made known either in the Decalogue or any part of *Leviticus* or *Deuteronomy*. They were dogmas of the Persians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Cretans; but they by no means formed part of the Jewish religion. Moses does not say: "Honor thy father and thy mother if thou wouldst go to heaven," but: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayst live long on the earth." He threatens the Jews only with bodily maladies and other material evils. Nowhere does he tell them that their immortal souls will be tortured after death or be rewarded. God, who himself led his people, punished or rewarded them at once for their good or bad actions. Everything was temporal. Those who ignorantly maintain that Moses taught the immortality of the soul strip the New Testament of one of its greatest advantages over the Old Testament. It is certain that the law of Moses spoke only of temporal chastisement, down to the fourth generation. However, in spite of the precise formulation of this law and the express declaration of God that he would punish down to the

fourth generation, Ezekiel announces the very opposite to the Jews. He says (xviii 20) that the son will not bear the iniquity of his father; and he even goes so far as to make God say that he had given them "statutes that were not good" (xx 25).

The book of *Ezekiel* was nevertheless inserted in the canon of inspired writers. It is true that the synagogue did not allow anyone to read it until he was thirty years old, as St. Jerome tells us; but that was in order that young men might not make evil use of the too candid pictures of vice in chapters xvi and xxiii. The book was always received, in spite of the fact that it expressly contradicts Moses.

When the immortality of the soul was at length admitted, which probably began about the time of the Babylonian captivity, the Sadducees continued to believe that there were no punishments and rewards after death, and that the power of feeling and thinking perished with us, like the power of walking and digesting. They denied the existence of angels. They differed from the other Jews much more than Protestants differ from Catholics, yet they remained in the communion of their brethren. Some of their sect even became high-priests.

The Pharisees believed in fatalism and metempsychosis. The Essenians thought that the souls of the just went to the Fortunate Islands, and those of the wicked into a kind of Tartarus. They offered no sacrifices, and met in a special synagogue. Thus, when we look closely into Judaism, we are astonished to find the greatest toleration in the midst of the most barbaric

horrors. It is a contradiction, we must admit; nearly all nations have been ruled by contradictions. Happy the contradiction that brings gentler ways into a people with bloody laws.

WHETHER INTOLERANCE WAS TAUGHT BY CHRIST

Let us now see whether Jesus Christ set up sanguinary laws, enjoined intolerance, ordered the building of dungeons of the inquisition, or instituted bodies of executioners.

There are, if I am not mistaken, few passages in the gospels from which the persecuting spirit might deduce that intolerance and constraint are lawful. One is the parable in which the kingdom of heaven is compared to a king who invites his friends to the wedding-feast of his son (*Matthew* xxii). The king says to them, by means of his servants: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come unto the marriage." Some go off to their country houses, without taking any notice of the invitation; others go about their business; others assault and slay the king's servants. The king sends his army against the murderers, and destroys their town. He then sends out on the high road to bring in to the feast all who can be found. One of these sits at table without a wedding dress, and is put in irons and cast into outer darkness.

It is clear that, as this allegory concerns only the kingdom of heaven, it certainly does not give a man the right to strangle or put in jail a neighbor who comes to sup with him without wearing a festive garment. I do not

remember reading anywhere in history of a prince who had a courtier arrested on that ground. It is hardly more probable that, if an emperor sent his pages to tell the princes of his empire that he had killed his fatlings and invited them to supper, the princes would kill the pages. The invitation to the feast means selection for salvation; the murder of the king's envoys represents the persecution of those who preach wisdom and virtue.

The other parable (*Luke* xiv) tells of a man who invites his friends to a grand supper. When he is ready to sit at table, he sends his servant to inform them. One pleads that he has bought an estate, and must go to visit it; as one does not usually go to see an estate during the night, the excuse does not hold. Another says that he has bought five pairs of oxen, and must try them; his excuse is as weak as the preceding—one does not try oxen during the night. A third replies that he has just married; and that, assuredly, is a good excuse. Then the holder of the banquet angrily summons the blind and the lame to the feast, and, seeing that there are still empty places, says to his valet: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in."

It is true that this parable is not expressly said to be a figure of the kingdom of heaven. There has, unhappily, been too much abuse of these words, "Compel them to come in"; but it is obvious that a single valet could not forcibly compel all the people he meets to come and sup with his master. Moreover, compulsory guests of this sort would not make the dinner

very agreeable. According to the weightiest commentators, "Compel them to come in" merely means "Beg, entreat, and press them to come in." What, I ask you, have this entreaty and supper to do with persecution?

If you want to take things literally, will you say that a man must be blind and lame, and compelled by force, to be in the bosom of the Church? Jesus says in the same parable: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors." Has any one ever inferred from this that we must not dine with our kinsmen and friends when they have acquired a little money?

After the parable of the feast Christ says (*Luke* xiv 26): "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. . . . For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost?" Is there anybody in the world so unnatural as to conclude that one must hate one's father and mother? Is it not clear that the meaning is: Do not hesitate between me and your dearest affections?

The passage in *Matthew* (xviii 17) is quoted: "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." That does not absolutely say that we must persecute pagans and the farmers of the king's taxes; they are cursed, it is true, but they are not handled over to the secular arm. Instead of the prerogatives of citizenship being taken

from these farmers of taxes, they have received the greatest privileges. It is the only profession that is condemned in Scripture, and the one most in favor with governments. Why then, should we not be as indulgent to our erring brethren as to the tax-gatherers?

The persecuting spirit further seeks a justification of itself in the driving of the merchants from the temple and the sending of a legion of demons from the body of a possessed man into the bodies of two thousand unclean animals. But who can fail to see that these are instances of the justice which God deigns to render to himself for the contravention of his law? It was a lack of respect for the house of the Lord to change its purview into a merchant's shop. It is no use saying that the Sanhedrim and the priests permitted this only for the sake of the sacrifices. The God to whom the sacrifices were made might assuredly destroy this profanation, though he was hidden in a human form; he might also punish those who introduced into the country such enormous herds of animals forbidden by a law which he deigned to observe himself. These cases have no relation whatever to persecution on account of dogma. The spirit of intolerance must be very poor in argument to appeal to such foolish pretexts.

Nearly all the rest of the words and actions of Christ breathe gentleness, patience, and indulgence. He does not even break out against Judas, who must betray him; he commands Peter never to use the sword; he reproaches the children of Zebedee, who, after the ex-

ample of Elias, wanted to bring fire from heaven on a town that refused them shelter.

In the end Christ succumbed to the wicked. If one may venture to compare the sacred with the profane—God with a man—his death, humanly speaking, had some resemblance to the death of Socrates. The Greek philosopher was a victim of the hatred of the Sophists, priests and leaders of the people; the legislator of the Christians was destroyed by the Scribes, Pharisees, and priests. Socrates might have escaped death, and would not; Jesus Christ offered himself voluntarily. The Greek philosopher not only pardoned his caluminators and his wicked judges, but begged them to treat his children in the same way if they should ever be so fortunate as, like himself, to incur their hatred; the legislator of the Christians, infinitely superior, begged his father to forgive his enemies.

If it be objected that, while Socrates was calm, Jesus Christ seemed to fear death, and suffered such extreme anguish that he sweated blood—the strongest and rarest symptom of fear—this was because he deigned to stoop to all the weakness of the human body that he had put on. His body trembled—his soul was invincible. He taught us that true strength and grandeur consist in supporting the evils under which our nature succumbs. It is a splendid act of courage to meet death while you fear it.

Socrates had treated the sophists as ignorant men, and convinced them of bad faith. Jesus, using his divine rights, treated the

Scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, fools, blind and wicked men, serpents, and vipers.

Need I now ask whether it is tolerance or intolerance that is of divine right? If you wish to follow Jesus Christ, be martyrs, not executioners.

THE ONLY CASES IN WHICH INTOLERANCE IS HUMANLY LAWFUL

For a government to have the right to punish the errors of men it is necessary that their errors must take the form of crime; they do not take the form of crime unless they disturb society; they disturb society when they engender fanaticism; hence men must avoid fanaticism in order to deserve toleration.

If a few young Jesuits, knowing that the Church has condemned the Jansenists, proceed to burn a house of the Oratorian priests because the Oratorian Quesnel was a Jansenist, it is clear that these Jesuits ought to be punished.

Again, if the Jesuits have acted upon improper maxims, and their institute is contrary to the laws of the kingdom, their society must be dissolved, and the Jesuits must be abolished and turned into citizens. The evil done to them is imaginary—the good is real. What hardship is there in wearing a short coat instead of a long black robe, and being free instead of being a slave?

If the Franciscan monks, carried away by a holy zeal for the Virgin Mary, go and destroy a Dominican convent, because the Dominicans believe that Mary was born in original sin, it

will be necessary to treat the Franciscans in much the same way as the Jesuits.

We may say the same of the Lutherans and Calvinists. It is useless for them to say that they follow the promptings of their consciences, that it is better to obey God than men, or that they are the true flock, and must exterminate the wolves. In such cases they are wolves themselves.

One of the most remarkable examples of fanaticism is found in a small Danish sect, whose principle was excellent. They desired to secure eternal salvation for their brethren; but the consequences of the principle were peculiar. They knew that all infants which die unbaptized are damned, and that those which are so fortunate as to die immediately after baptism enjoy eternal glory. They therefore proceeded to kill all the newly-baptized boys and girls that they could find. No doubt this was a way of securing for them the highest conceivable happiness and preserving them from the sin and misery of this life. But these charitable folk forgot that it is not lawful to do a little evil that a great good may follow; that they had no right to the lives of these children; that the majority of parents are carnal enough to prefer to keep their children rather than see them slain in order to enter paradise; and that the magistrate has to punish homicide, even when it is done with a good intention.

The Jews would seem to have a better right than any to rob and kill us. Though there are a hundred instances of toleration in the Old

Testament, there are also some instances and laws of severity. God has at times commanded them to kill idolaters, and reserve only the marriageable girls. Now they regard us as idolaters, and, although we tolerate them to-day, it is possible that, if they became masters, they would suffer only our girls to live.

They would, at least, be absolutely compelled to slay all the Turks, because the Turks occupy the lands of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorrheans, Jersenseans, Arcaeans, Cineans, Hamateans, and Samaritans. All these people were anathematized, and their country, which was more than seventy-five miles long, was given to the Jews in several consecutive covenants. They ought to regain their possessions, which the Mohammedans have usurped for the last thousand years.

If the Jews were now to reason in this way, it is clear that the only reply we should make would be to put them in the galleys.

These are almost the only cases in which intolerance seems reasonable.

ACCOUNT OF A CONTROVERSIAL DISPUTE IN CHINA

In the early years of the reign of the great Emperor Kam-hi a mandarin of the city of Canton heard from his house a great noise, which proceeded from the next house. He inquired if anybody was being killed, and was told that the almoner of the Danish missionary society, a chaplain from Batavia, and a Jesuit were disputing. He had them brought

to his house, put tea and sweets before them, and asked why they had quarreled.

The Jesuit replied that it was very painful for him, since he was always right, to have to do with men who were always wrong; that he had at first argued with the greatest restraint, but had at length lost patience.

The mandarin, with the utmost discretion, reminded them that politeness was needed in all discussion, told them that in China men never became angry, and asked the cause of the dispute.

The Jesuit answered: "My lord, I leave it to you to decide. These two gentlemen refuse to submit to the decrees of the Council of Trent."

"I am astonished," said the mandarin. Then, turning to the refractory pair, he said: "Gentlemen, you ought to respect the opinions of a large gathering. I do not know what the Council of Trent is, but a number of men are always better informed than a single one. No one ought to imagine that he is better than others, and has a monopoly of reason. So our great Confucius teaches; and, believe me, you will do well to submit to the Council of Trent."

The Dane then spoke. "My lord speaks with the greatest wisdom," he said; "we respect great councils, as is proper, and therefore we are in entire agreement with several that were held before the Council of Trent."

"Oh, if that is the case," said the mandarin, "I beg your pardon. You may be right. So you and this Dutchman are of the same opinion, against this poor Jesuit."

"Not a bit," said the Dutchman. "This fellow's opinions are almost as extravagant as those of the Jesuit yonder, who has been so very amiable to you. I can't bear them."

"I don't understand," said the mandarin. "Are you not all three Christians? Have you not all three come to teach Christianity in our empire? Ought you not, therefore, to hold the same dogmas?"

"It is this way, my lord," said the Jesuit; "these two are mortal enemies, and are both against me. Hence it is clear that they are both wrong, and I am right."

"That is not quite clear," said the mandarin; "strictly speaking, all three of you may be wrong. I should like to hear you all, one after the other."

The Jesuit then made a rather long speech, during which the Dane and the Dutchman shrugged their shoulders. The mandarin did not understand a word of it. Then the Dane spoke; the two opponents regarded each other with pity, and the mandarin again failed to understand. The Dutchman had the same effect. In the end they all spoke together and abused each other roundly. The good mandarin secured silence with great difficulty, and said: "If you want us to tolerate your teaching here, begin by being yourselves neither intolerant nor intolerable."

When they went out the Jesuit met a Dominican friar, and told him that he had won, adding that truth always triumphed. The Dominican said: "Had I been there, you would not have won; I should have convicted you of

lying and idolatry." The quarrel became warm, and the Jesuit and Dominican took to pulling each other's hair. The mandarin, on hearing of the scandal, sent them both to prison. A sub-mandarin said to the judge: "How long does your excellency wish them to be kept in prison?" "Until they agree," said the judge. "Then," said the sub-mandarin, "they are in prison for life." "In that case," said the judge, "until they forgive each other." "They will never forgive each other," said the other; "I know them." "Then," said the mandarin, "let them stop there until they pretend to forgive each other."

WHETHER IT IS USEFUL TO MAINTAIN THE PEOPLE IN SUPERSTITION

Such is the weakness, such the perversity, of the human race that it is better, no doubt, for it to be subject to all conceivable superstitions, provided they be not murderous, than to live without religion. Man has always needed a curb; and, although it was ridiculous to sacrifice to fauns or naiads, it was much more reasonable and useful to worship these fantastic images of the deity than to sink into atheism. A violent atheist would be as great a plague as a violent superstitious man.

When men have not sound ideas of the divinity, false ideas will take their place; just as, in ages of impoverishment, when there is not sound money, people use bad coin. The pagan feared to commit a crime lest he should be punished by his false gods; the Asiatic

fears the chastisement of his pagoda. Religion is necessary wherever there is a settled society. The laws take care of known crimes; religion watches secret crime.

But once men have come to embrace a pure and holy religion, superstition becomes, not merely useless, but dangerous. We must not feed on acorns those to whom God offers bread.

Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy—the mad daughter of a wise mother. These daughters have too long dominated the earth.

When, in our ages of barbarism, there were scarcely two feudal lords who had a New Testament in their homes, it might be pardonable to press fables on the vulgar; that is to say, on these feudal lords, their weak-minded wives, and their brutal vassals. They were led to believe that St. Christopher had carried the infant Jesus across a river; they were fed with stories of sorcery and diabolical possession; they readily believed that St. Genou healed gout, and St. Claire sore eyes. The children believed in the werewolf, and their parents in the girdle of St. Francis. The number of relics was incalculable.

The sediment of these superstitions remained among the people even when religion had been purified. We know that when M. de Noailles, Bishop of Chalons, removed and threw in the fire the pretended relic of the sacred navel of Jesus Christ the town of Chalons took proceedings against him. But his courage was equal to his piety, and he succeeded in convincing the people that they could worship Jesus Christ in

spirit and truth without having his navel in their church.

The Jansenists contributed not a little gradually to root out from the mind of the nation the false ideas that dishonored the Christian religion. People ceased to believe that it sufficed to pray for thirty days to the Virgin to obtain all that they wished, and sin with impunity.

In the end the citizens began to suspect that it was not really St. Genevieve who gave or withheld rain, but God himself who disposed of the elements. The monks were astonished to see that their saints no longer worked miracles. If the writers of the life of St. Francis Xavier returned to this world, they would not dare to say that the saint raised nine people from the dead, that he was in two places at the same time, and that, when his crucifix fell into the sea, a crab restored it to him.

It is the same with excommunication. Historians tell us that when King Robert had been excommunicated by Pope Gregory V, for marrying his god-mother, the Princess Bertha, his servants threw out of the window the meat served up to the king, and Queen Bertha was delivered of a goose in punishment of the incestuous marriage. I doubt if in our time the waiters of the king of France would, if he were excommunicated, throw his dinner out of the window, and whether the queen would give birth to a gosling.

There remain, it is true, a few bigoted fanatics in the suburbs; but the disease, like

vermin, attacks only the lowest of the populace. Every day reason penetrates farther into France, into the shops of merchants as well as the mansions of lords. We must cultivate the fruits of reason, the more willingly since it is now impossible to prevent them from developing. France enlightened by Pascal, Nicole, Arnaud, Bossuet, Descartes, Gassendi, Bayle, Fontenelle, etc., cannot be ruled as it was ruled in earlier times.

If the masters of error—the grand masters—so long paid and honored for brutalizing the human species, ordered us today to believe that the seed must die in order to germinate; that the earth stands motionless on its foundations—that it does not travel round the sun; that the tides are not a natural effect of gravitation; that the rainbow is not due to the refraction and reflection of light, etc., and based their decrees on ill-understood passages of Scripture, we know how they would be regarded by educated men. Would it be too much to call them fools? And if these masters employed force and persecution to secure the ascendancy of their insolent ignorance, would it be improper to speak of them as wild beasts?

The more the superstitions of the monks are despised, the more the bishops and priests are respected; while they do good, the monkish superstitions from Rome do nothing but evil. And of all these superstitions, is not the most dangerous that of hating one's neighbor on account of his opinions? And is it not evident that it would be even more reasonable to worship the sacred navel, the sacred prepuce, and

the milk and dress of the Virgin Mary, than to detest and persecute one's brother?

VIRTUE BETTER THAN SCIENCE

The less we have of dogma, the less dispute; the less we have of dispute, the less misery. If that is not true, I am wrong.

Religion was instituted to make us happy in this world and the next. But what must we do to be happy in the next world? Be just.[14] What must we do to be happy in this world, as far as the misery of our nature allows? Be indulgent.

It would be the height of folly to pretend to bring all men to have the same thoughts in metaphysics. It would be easier to subdue the whole universe by arms than to subdue all the minds in a single city.

Euclid easily persuaded all men of the truths of geometry. How? Because every single one of them is a corollary of the axiom, "Two and two make four." It is not exactly the same in the mixture of metaphysics and theology.

When Bishop Alexander and the priest Arius began (in the fourth century) to dispute as to the way in which the Logos emanated from the Father, the Emperor Constantine at first wrote to them as follows (as we find in Eusebius and Socrates): "You are great fools to dispute about things you do not understand."

If the two parties had been wise enough to

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[14]It may be useful to recall that, as earlier pages show, Voltaire did not believe in the "next world." Much of the phrasing of this part is, when it is not ironical, merely an *argumentum ad hominem.*

perceive that the emperor was right, the Christian world would not have been stained with blood for three hundred years.

What, indeed, can be more stupid and more horrible than to say to men: "My friends, it is not enough to be loyal subjects, submissive children, tender fathers, just neighbors and to practise every virtue, cultivate friendship, avoid ingratitude, and worship Christ in peace; you must, in addition, know how one is engendered from all eternity, and how to distinguish the *homoousion* in the *hypostasis*, or we shall condemn you to be burned forever, and will meantime put you to death"?

Had such a proposition been made to Archimedes, or Poseidonius, or Varro, or Cato, or Cicero, what would he have said?

Constantine did not persevere in his resolution to impose silence on the contending parties. He might have invited the leaders of the pious frenzy to his palace and asked them what authority they had to disturb the world: "Have you the title-deed of the divine family? What does it matter to you whether the Logos was made or engendered, provided men are loyal to him, preach a sound morality, and practise it as far as they can? I have done many wrong things in my time, and so have you. You are ambitious, so am I. The empire has cost me much knavery and cruelty; I have murdered nearly all my relatives. I repent, and would expiate my crimes by restoring peace to the Roman Empire. Do not prevent me from doing the only good that can efface my earlier barbarity. Help me to end my days in peace."

Possibly he would have had no influence on the disputants; possibly he would have been flattered to find himself, in long red robe, his head covered with jewels, presiding at a council.

Yet this it was that opened the gate to all the plagues that came from Asia upon the West. From every disputed verse of Scripture there issued a fury, armed with a sophism and a sword, that goaded men to madness and cruelty. The marauding Huns and Goths and Vandals did infinitely less harm; and the greatest harm they did was to join themselves in these fatal disputes.

OF UNIVERSAL TOLERATION

One does not need great art and skilful eloquence to prove that Christians ought to tolerate each other—nay, even to regard all men as brothers. Why, you say, is the Turk, the Chinese, or the Jew my brother? Assuredly; are we not all children of the same father, creatures of the same God?

But these people despise us and treat us as idolaters. Very well; I will tell them that they are quite wrong. It seems to me that I might astonish, at least, the stubborn pride of a Mohammedan or a Buddhist priest if I spoke to them as follows:

This little globe, which is but a point, travels in space like many other globes; we are lost in the immensity. Man, about five feet high, is certainly a small thing in the universe. One of these imperceptible beings says to some of his neighbors, in Arabia or South Africa:

"Listen to me, for the God of all these worlds has enlightened me. There are nine hundred million little ants like us on the earth, but my ant-hole alone is dear to God. All the others are eternally reprobated by him. Mine alone will be happy."

They would then interrupt me, and ask who was the fool that talked all this nonsense. I should be obliged to tell them that it was themselves. I would then try to appease them, which would be difficult.

I would next address myself to the Christians, and would venture to say to, for instance, a Dominican friar—an inquisitor of the faith: "Brother, you are aware that each province in Italy has its own dialect, and that people do not speak at Venice and Bergamo as they do at Florence. The Academy of La Crusca has fixed the language. Its dictionary is a rule that has to be followed, and the grammar of Matei is an infallible guide. But do you think that the consul of the Academy, or Matei in his absence, could in conscience cut out the tongues of all the Venetians and the Bergamese who persisted in speaking their own dialect?"

The inquisitor replies: "The two cases are very different. In our case it is a question of your eternal salvation. It is for your good that the heads of the inquisition direct that you shall be seized on the information of any one person, however infamous or criminal; that you shall have no advocate to defend you; that the name of your accuser shall not be made known to you; that the inquisitor shall promise you pardon and then condemn you; and that

you shall then be subjected to five kinds of torture, and afterwards either flogged or sent to the galleys or ceremoniously burned. On this Father Ivonet, Doctor Chucalon, Zanchinus, Campegius, Royas, Telinus, Gomarus, Diabarus, and Gemelinus are explicit, and this pious practice admits of no exception."

I would take the liberty of replying: "Brother, possibly you are right. I am convinced that you wish to do me good. But could I not be saved without all that?"

It is true that these absurd horrors do not stain the face of the earth every day; but they have often done so, and the record of them would make up a volume much larger than the gospels which condemn them. Not only is it cruel to persecute, in this brief life, those who differ from us, but I am not sure if it is not too bold to declare that they are damned eternally. It seems to me that it is not the place of the atoms of a moment, such as we are, thus to anticipate the decrees of the Creator. Far be it from me to question the principle, "Out of the Church there is no salvation." I respect it, and all that it teaches; but do we really know all the ways of God, and the full range of his mercies? May we not hope in him as much as fear him? Is it not enough to be loyal to the Church? Must each individual usurp the rights of the Deity, and decide, before he does, the eternal lot of all men?

When we wear mourning for a king of Sweden, Denmark, England, or Prussia, do we say that we wear mourning for one who burns

eternally in hell? There are in Europe forty million people who are not of the Church of Rome. Shall we say to each of them: "Sir, seeing that you are infallibly damned, I will neither eat, nor deal, nor speak with you?"

What ambassador of France, presented in audience to the Sultan, would say in the depths of his heart: "His Highness will undoubtedly burn for all eternity because he has been circumcised?" If he really believed that the Sultan is the mortal enemy of God, the object of his vengeance, could he speak to him? Ought he to be sent to him? With whom could we have intercourse? What duty of civil life could we ever fulfill if we were really convinced that we were dealing with damned souls?

Followers of a merciful God, if you were cruel of heart; if, in worshiping him whose law consisted in loving one's neighbor as oneself, you had burdened this pure and holy law with sophistry and unintelligible disputes; if you had lit the fires of discord for the sake of a new word or a single letter of the alphabet; if you had attached eternal torment to the omission of a few words or ceremonies that other peoples could not know, I should say to you:

"Transport yourselves with me to the day on which all men will be judged, when God will deal with each according to his works. I see all the dead of former ages and of our own stand in his presence. Are you sure that our Creator and Father will say to the wise and virtuous Confucius, to the lawgiver Solon, to

Pythagoras, to Zaleucus, to Socrates, to Plato, to Titus, the delight of the human race, to Epictetus, and to so many other model men: 'Go, monsters, go and submit to a chastisement infinite in its intensity and duration; your torment shall be as eternal as I. And you, my beloved Jean Chatel, Ravaillac Damiens, Cartouche, etc. [assassins in the cause of the Church], who have died with the prescribed formulas, come and share my empire and felicity forever.' "[15]

You shrink with horror from such sentiments; and, now that they have escaped me, I have no more to say to you.

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[15]This horrible doctrine must not wholly be relegated to the eighteenth century and the Middle Ages. It is still solemn Catholic doctrine, defined by the Vatican Council in 1870, that no atheist or agnostic, whether in good or bad faith, can be saved.